



April 15, 2011

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Informal Meeting to Discuss “Farmers' Markets” and Sale of Shellfish Directly to Consumers

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) will be holding an informal meeting to discuss concerns about shellfish marketing and direct sale of shellfish to consumers at farmers' markets. For the past few years there has been an ongoing discussion at DMF with the Department of Public Health Food Protection Program and the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) about sale of shellfish at farmers' markets.

Invitees to this meeting will be aquaculturists (shellfish growers) who MDAR has identified as growers seeking this marketing opportunity. The invitation will also be extended to the MA Aquaculture Association for general industry input. At the meeting, DMF hopes to hear first-hand comments from growers about the marketing and sale issues. DMF and DPH officials will also be on hand to discuss and answer questions about existing regulations and policies governing these activities.

The meeting will be held on Thursday April 21st at 6 p.m. at the Sandwich Human Services Building on 270 Quaker Meetinghouse Road in East Sandwich. For more information, contact Deputy Director Daniel McKiernan at 617 626-1536 or email at dan.mckiernan@state.ma.us.

Graduates from the Agricultural Business Training Program

The MDAR Agricultural Business Training Program just wrapped up another inspiring round of courses for 2011. Five fully enrolled courses covered three different levels of ag business development serving a total of 60 existing or planned farm enterprises. Many enrollees brought an extra decision maker to the classes.



Reflecting a continuing trend in Massachusetts Agriculture, participant ideas, backgrounds, experiences and opportunities were incredibly diverse. All were driven by multi-talented individuals whose markets focus primarily on direct retail/targeted wholesale sales and/or adding value to raw crops and products. As always, the networks that develop through participation with peers were invaluable. ABTP courses focus on guided self exploration, and participants quickly honed in on the segments of their plans that offer the best potential for success -and those that need the most attention to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Commissioner Scott Soares has attended almost every ABTP course graduation for the past six years, often commenting to the participants that he learns a lot about where things are headed in Massachusetts agriculture from hearing and asking questions about their graduation presentations.

Some comments from this year's courses on evaluation forms:

- "Good exercise in honestly evaluating your business and seeing other opportunities/problems with your current operation" (Tilling the Soil Course)
- "A good base to understanding your ag enterprise" (Tiling the Soil Course)
- " Learned so very much - forced me to take a new look at the farm" (Tilling the Soil Course)
- "It actually helped me redefine what my business will be" (Planning for Startup Course)
- "Well organized and supportive - enjoyed meeting other farmers" (Planning for Startup Course)
- "Opens your eyes to the pros and cons of an ag business" (Explorer Course)
- "All different backgrounds raised questions we wouldn't have asked" (Explorer Course)
- "Instructor was encouraging and positive but honest" (Explorer Course)

For more information on the Program, [click here](#) or contact Rick Chandler, rick.chandler@state.ma.us, 413-548-1905.

2011 Application and Guidelines for Exhibiting in the MA State Building



The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) invites Massachusetts organizations and businesses to apply for the purpose of showcasing Massachusetts agriculture, commerce, culture, food and tourism through informational, educational, promotional and retail exhibits in the Massachusetts Building at the Eastern States Exposition located in West Springfield, Massachusetts.

The dates for the 2011 Big E are September 16 - October 2, 2011. Details and application [Details and application click here](#). MA Building Webpage: www.mass.gov/agr/fairs/massbuilding.

USDA Announces Opportunity for Massachusetts Organic Farmers to Implement Conservation Practices

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced another funding opportunity for certified organic farmers and those transitioning to organic production to implement resource conservation practices on their agricultural operations. Fiscal year 2011 marks the third year of USDA's Organic Initiative. **Farmers are encouraged to apply by May 20, 2011.** Click on site for details:

http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/news/news_EQIP_organic_initiative_2011.html.

Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA) Local Vendor Fair Looking for Exhibitors

Massachusetts Convention Center Authority and our food and beverage partner, Levy Restaurants, are going local. Our goal is to purchase 50 percent or more of the products we serve from local sources, an effort that will ensure freshness, save on transportation costs, and support the local economy, especially local farms and small trades. Local Vendor Fair.

Do you have a specialty food item or product unique to the New England area? *Snacks, Artisan Foods, Candies*

Do you represent a locally produced non-alcoholic beverage? *Sodas, Juices, Refreshments*.

If so, we look forward to meeting you! Massachusetts Convention Center Authority and Levy Restaurants are hosting a Local Vendor Fair to source fresh, new local products! Wednesday, **May 25 and Thursday, May 26, 2011** Hynes Convention Center, 900 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02115. For more information, or to make an appointment, please visit www.massconvention.com/vendorFair/default.html.



MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of local agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – [Agricultural Development](#), [Animal Health](#), [Crop and Pest Services](#), and [Technical Assistance](#) – MDAR strives to support, regulate, and enhance the Commonwealth's agricultural community, working to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, go to www.mass.gov/agr or follow us at www.twitter.com/agcommishsoares for the latest agricultural trends and updates. To keep up to date on workshops and events, visit www.mass.gov/agr/events/coming_up.htm.